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AN ADVANCED PLACEMENT PROGRAM IN HIGH SCHOOL CORRESPONDENCE STUDY.

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CORRESPONDENCE STUDY GUIDES FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WERE PREPARED IN THE SUBJECTS OF MATHEMATICS, ENGLISH, AMERICAN HISTORY, AND EUROPEAN HISTORY FOR AN ADVANCED COLLEGE-PLACEMENT PROGRAM. INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROGRAM WAS MADE WIDELY AVAILABLE TO HIGH SCHOOLS IN NEBRASKA. BY THE FALL OF 1965, HOWEVER, IT BECAME APPARENT THAT THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN THE PROGRAM WAS NOT SUFFICIENT TO PERMIT COMPARISONS OF ACHIEVEMENT TO BE MADE. NO DATA, THEREFORE, WERE COLLECTED, AND THE PROGRAM WAS TERMINATED. ANOTHER REPORT ON THIS PROJECT IS ED 010 393. (GC)

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Cooperative Research Project No. 2010

Gayle B. Childs

University of Nebraska
Lincoln, Nebraska

1966

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Chapter I

THE NATURE OF THE STUDY

Correspondence study at the secondary school level has been used in the United States and in a large number of other countries for many years to provide educational opportunity to those for whom such opportunity would otherwise not be available. Correspondence study has been used to broaden the curricular offerings of small schools and to make available courses otherwise not open to students who attend these schools. It has been used to reach students in isolated areas where there are no schools, to provide education for the physically handicapped who cannot get to school, to provide education for children in families which move frequently thus prohibiting local school attendance, to reach overseas to young people temporarily abroad but who wish to continue with an American-type of education, to permit schools to resolve schedule conflicts without re-scheduling students into courses they do not wish to take, and to provide an opportunity for adults to complete high school without returning to attend classes with persons much younger than they. For these reasons, and others, hundreds of thousands of persons in the United States are today enrolled in correspondence study courses at the high school level.

Recently there have been developed in this country a large number of programs to permit gifted young people while they are still enrolled in high school to follow courses of study which are more demanding than those normally offered in high school. In many cases these programs are of college level and are designed to provide an opportunity for those able to do so to qualify for advanced placement when they enter college. Some programs are the result of local

arrangements between high schools and a particular college. There is also a nationwide program for advanced placement which is growing rapidly. This is the Advanced Placement Program of the College Entrance Examination Board.

While the opportunity to participate in advanced placement programs is now quite widespread this opportunity is, unfortunately, not equally available in all schools. There are many schools that have not been able to effect either expansion or improvement in their activities to provide for education of the gifted. These are principally the smaller schools with limited resources and small and minimally qualified staffs. Such limitations make it difficult to increase substantially the local subject matter offerings and to go deeply into subjects since the teachers who are available often lack the necessary preparation. At the same time there are within any group of pupils in these schools as large a percentage with high ability as there are in any group of the same size in schools which offer better opportunities for advanced placement. There are, in addition, large numbers of very able students who live in isolated areas or who are temporarily living abroad who could just as well be studying advanced courses in place of the courses now available to them.

Correspondence study, which has so long been used to provide educational opportunity in a variety of ways to persons for whom the kind of education they needed was not available, appears well suited to serve as a means of providing advanced placement-type courses to able students in locations where advanced placement courses are not offered locally. The potential of correspondence study as a means of providing high school students with opportunity to qualify for advanced placement in college needs to be explored.

Chapter II

RELATED RESEARCH

A considerable amount of research has been carried on in regard to correspondence instruction, particularly as it operates at the secondary school level. However, there is very little research regarding the success of correspondence study in providing instruction for gifted students, primarily because there has been little use of correspondence study for this purpose.

An area of research which is of concern in relation to the present study is that which has to do with the achievement of correspondence study students. Another area is in regard to the completion rate in correspondence instruction.

Achievement of High School Correspondence Study Students

Cross found that there is a low correlation between mental ability and reading ability and success in terms of improvement in correspondence work and that certain correspondence courses do bring about significant improvement in pupils at all levels of mental ability and reading ability.

Lytle, in a questionnaire study, found general agreement among school superintendents that correspondence study was proving to be of value.

McDowell found that when students took part of their high school program by correspondence study, this had little effect on achievement in other subjects but that students earned higher grades in their correspondence courses.

Hanna compared the achievement of students in correspondence study with the achievement of students of comparable mental ability

taking the same subjects in the classroom. He found that the achievement of the correspondence study students as determined by standardized tests was, in each of the courses analyzed, as satisfactory or more satisfactory than that of the classroom group.

Meierhenry compared the achievement of correspondence students in vocational courses with the achievement of students in similar classroom courses and found that achievement as measured by objective tests was comparable in the two groups.

Childs conducted the most extensive study in this area when he compared the achievement of 1200 correspondence study students enrolled in 14 different courses with that of 1800 classroom students enrolled in similar courses. When age and mental ability were controlled a statistically significant difference in favor of the correspondence study group was found in eight subjects; a difference not significant in favor of the correspondence study group was found in one subject; no difference was found in three subjects; and a difference, not statistically significant, in favor of the classroom group was found in two subjects.

Childs also found, in a separate study, that students who completed courses in mathematics by correspondence study while in high school received significantly higher grades in their initial mathematics courses at the University than did students who took no correspondence study courses in mathematics in high school.

Completion Rate in Correspondence Study

A study of completion rates in 24 member institutions of the National University Extension Association shows that in these institutions nearly 70 per cent of students who begin work on high school correspondence study courses carry the work to completion.

A number of studies relating to the completion of correspondence study students have been conducted at the University of Nebraska. Platt found, for the 3-year period 1935-1938, that 75 per cent of those who began work on correspondence study courses carried them to completion. A study by Fredstrom indicated a completion rate of 73 per cent for the period 1941-1943. Raser found a completion rate of 69 per cent for 1943-1944 and 73 per cent for 1944-1945. Haberman also found a completion rate of 73 per cent for students in the Nebraska correspondence study program during the year 1951-1952.

Correspondence Study for the Gifted

A review of the literature reveals no evidence that any experimental work has been reported on the use of correspondence courses with gifted students.

A project was completed at the University of Minnesota under the direction of Rosenbloom in which correspondence study was used in teaching mathematics courses based on the materials of the School Mathematics Study Group to gifted students in algebra and geometry. The results were apparently successful although the completion rate was somewhat lower than that normally found in high school correspondence study.

Chapter III

OBJECTIVES

It is clear that many young people capable of profiting from taking advanced placement courses in high school are now lacking this opportunity. It seems reasonable that correspondence study, which evidence shows to be working successfully in regular high school instruction, could well be used to provide the kind of instruction which would prepare high schools students for advanced placement in college.

However, while this may be a reasonable assumption it remains to be proved in practice. The purpose of this research study is to determine whether correspondence study courses based on the recommendations of the Advanced Placement Program of the College Entrance Examination Board can be effective in preparing students for advanced placement in college. The purpose may be stated as a null hypothesis: "There is no significant difference in mean scores on Advanced Placement Examinations between students who take a supervised correspondence study course based on the recommendations of the Advanced Placement Program of the College Entrance Examination Board and students who take a classroom course in the same subject based on the same recommendations." The hypothesis will be tested in the subject matter areas of English, American history, European history and mathematics.

Chapter IV

PROCEDURE

The first step in establishing a program of advanced placement instruction by correspondence study was the preparation of the necessary correspondence study syllabi or study guides. Writers were secured on the basis of recommendations from persons familiar with the Advanced Placement Program of the College Entrance Examination Board and familiar with the operation of the program in the high schools which were participating in the program. Each of the four writers eventually secured to prepare study guides in the areas of American history, European history, English, and mathematics had had extensive experience with the Advanced Placement Program or was currently teaching advanced placement courses in high school.

Syllabi were prepared to be available for student enrollments in the fall of 1964. It was anticipated that enrollment in each of the four correspondence courses would be sufficient to establish an experimental group. Each correspondence study student would be asked to take the College Board Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Students who completed their work in time would take the Advanced Placement Examinations in regional centers in May of 1965.

The Advanced Placement Program had agreed to make available the May 1965 scores on the Advanced Placement Examination of students enrolled for classroom instruction in the Advanced Placement Program who had scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test equivalent to the scores on this examination made by students in the experimental group.

Through analysis of variance the relative achievement of the two groups could then be compared.

Unfortunately, the number of students enrolled in the correspondence study program has not been sufficient to permit reasonable comparisons to be made. Therefore, no data have been collected and the project has been cancelled.

Chapter V

ANALYSIS OF DATA

None.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

None.

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